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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8259

INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS AMMAN 001176

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PTER PHUM ASEC IZ SY JO

SUBJECT: VERDICTS IN THE CHEMICAL PLOT, ZARQAWI SENTENCED TO DEATH - AGAIN

REF: A. AMMAN 05 1783

1B. AMMAN 05 7438

1C. AMMAN 05 8717

1D. AMMAN 05 9515

11. (U) Summary: Jordan's State Security Court (SSC) on February 14 sentenced nine men to hang, including al-Qaida in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, for the 2004 plot to carry out a chemical/vehicle-borne explosive attack against the U.S. Embassy and Jordanian government targets. The plot's mastermind, Azmi al-Jayousi, and four co-defendants, all members of the outlawed Kataeb Al Tawhid ("Monotheism Brigades"), were present for the sentencing, while Zarqawi, already sentenced to death for the 2002 assassination of U.S. diplomat Lawrence Foley and for the failed 2004 suicide attack on the Jordanian-Iraqi border, and three others were condemned to the death penalty in absentia. The court sentenced two of the 13 defendants to prison terms of between one and three years, and acquitted another two defendants. End Summary.

12. (U) The SSC found Azmi Jaiousi, Hussein Mustafa, Ahmad Samir, Hassan Samik and Syrian Anas Amin guilty of conspiracy to plot terrorist acts and with manufacturing and possessing explosives with illicit intent. Zarqawi and three other defendants, Shawqi Ahmad, Ibrahim Mohammad, and Syrian Suleiman Khalid Darwish, were sentenced to death in absentia on the same count. The SSC also sentenced Wassim Mohammad to three years in prison for plotting illegal actions. Jamal Daghidi was convicted of harboring a fugitive, but was sentenced to time served and released. The court acquitted two other defendants, including Syrian Mohammad Salmah, finding they had no knowledge of the plots. Upon hearing of the acquittal of Salmah, several defendants accused him of collaborating with the authorities. The defendants also accused the court as unjust and a tool of the West.

13. (U) The trial of the 13 defendants, beginning in February 2005, was marked by Jayousi's disruptive behavior, and by the efforts of the defendants and their lawyers, to delay the proceedings. During the trial Jayousi threatened court officials with decapitation, ridiculed the judges - throwing his slippers at one - and, at one point, chanted "Allah Akhbar" for half an hour. Defense lawyers in March 2005 alleged the defendants were humiliated and tortured while in custody, and requested that prosecutor Mohammad Obeidat be removed from the case as the group was also charged with planning to assassinate Obeidat (Ref A). In September 2005, defense lawyers requested the court summon a former General Intelligence Directorate chief, a serving intelligence officer, and an SSC prosecutor general as witnesses to prove that the defendants did not possess hazardous chemicals (Ref B). In October 2005 defense lawyers called an expert witness who testified that the seized chemicals were hazardous, but that great expertise would have been needed to make the chemicals effective as a weapon (Ref C).

¶4. (U) The defense now has 30 days to appeal the decision.
If the Court of Appeals upholds the SSC's verdict, the King
must sign death warrants before any executions can take place.
HALE